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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

♦ Secretary-General recommends to Security Council that it extend mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another six months until 31 July; agreement reached on handover to Lebanese Government of western part of Ghanaian battalion sector.

♦ Secretary-General sends messages to fighting parties in Mogadiscio containing copies of Security Council resolution on Somalia adopted yesterday. In separate development, Vasily Safronchuk to travel to Libya to seek cooperation with that Government as requested in resolution 731 (1992).

♦ United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO symposium on Question of Palestine in Nicosia ends one-week session adopting declaration.

♦ Committee on Discrimination against Women takes up China's second periodic report.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended to the Security Council that it extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another six months, until 31 July. The Secretary-General says that with the Arabs and the Israelis currently engaged in peace negotiations, UNIFIL's contribution to stability in the region remains important.

In his report to the Council, dated 21 January, Mr. Boutros-Ghali also announced that an agreement had been reached between the United Nations and the Lebanese Government on the handover to the Lebanese Government of the western part of the Ghanaian battalion sector of UNIFIL. The UNIFIL troops thus freed would be redeployed to the east and south, where there was a greater need for their presence.

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The Secretary-General reported that the last six months had been more difficult than preceding periods, both for UNIFIL and for the inhabitants of south Lebanon. Hostilities between Lebanese resistance groups and the Israeli Defence Force had intensified and the number of casualties had risen.

With regard to the financial situation of the Force, the Secretary-General noted that, at present, unpaid assessments to the Force amounted to some $264 million. He appealed to all member countries to pay their assessments promptly and in full and to clear all remaining arrears. (S/23452)

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Spokesman François Giuliani told correspondents today that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had sent copies of the Security Council resolution, adopted yesterday evening, to the two fighting parties in Mogadiscio. That resolution called on all States to implement a weapons embargo against Somalia and urged the parties to the conflict to agree to a cease-fire. The Spokesman said United Nations officials in Nairobi would attempt to deliver these messages by hand to Mogadiscio.

Meanwhile,the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has expressed its readiness to cooperate with the United Nations in seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict in Somalia, in conformity with the Council resolution. In a press release issued at Headquarters today, OAU Secretary General, Salim Salim, renewed his appeal to the warring factions in Somalia "to heed the calls for an immediate cease-fire" so that humanitarian assistance could be channelled to the victims and a lasting and peaceful solution could be reached.

In separate news today, the Spokesman said the Secretary-General had asked Mr. Vasily Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, to travel to Libya, in pursuance of the Secretary-General mandate under the Security Council resolution adopted on Tuesday.

Mr. Safronchuk will leave today.

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The seventh United Nations Asian Seminar and Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine ended today in Nicosia, Cyprus, with the adoption of a Declaration reiterating the essential elements of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine which includes the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian territory occupied since June 1967, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories.

Welcoming the convening on the Peace Conference on the Middle East, participants expressed hope that the talks would be successful in establishing peace in the region. They also expressed concern at the continuing settlement activity and land confiscation in the occupied territories, condemned the settlement of immigrants and Israeli citizens in the occupied Palestinian

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territory and urged the Security Council and other international bodies to take appropriate action to address the problem.

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The traditional preference for male children was a sentiment which had been held over from China's feudal past, according to Jin Yongjian, and the country's one child per family policy had resulted in no alteration in the proportion of male and female children in China.

The Chinese delegate was responding to questions on family planning yesterday, as the Committee on Discrimination against Women was examining China's second periodic report on efforts to further the aims of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Mr. Jin also told the Committee that his country had taken a number of steps to improve the status of women in an atmosphere of "political stability and economic prosperity". Outlining recent developments concerning women, he cited a proposed new law on the Protection of the Rights of Women, and told Committee members that his Government had also taken strict measures against criminal acts infringing on women's rights, including measures against prostitution and the kidnapping of women and children. Laws had also been enacted to protect women's rights in politics, employment, education, marriage and the family, he said.

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